

# Decision Regarding Findings Report INV-24-7 Concerning Policing Provided by the Ottawa Police Service

## Decision By:

Ryan Teschner, Inspector General of Policing

## I. INTRODUCTION

[1] This decision addresses a complaint received by the Inspector General of Policing against the Ottawa Police Service (“OPS”), alleging that the OPS is not doing enough to address incidents of bicycle theft. An inspector with Ontario’s Inspectorate of Policing (“IoP”) investigated the complaint to determine whether OPS or the Ottawa Police Service Board (“OPSB”) failed to comply with the *Community Safety and Policing Act, 2019*, SO 2019, c 1, Sch 1 (the “Act”) or its regulations in relation to the complaint.<sup>1</sup>

[2] Following a review of the inspector’s Findings Report,<sup>2</sup> which is attached to this Decision as Appendix A, and for the reasons that follow, I conclude that OPS and the OPSB have complied with the Act and the regulations and have delivered adequate and effective policing as it relates to this matter.

## II. BACKGROUND

[3] The complainant alleges that the OPS has failed to adequately address increased instances of bicycle thefts in downtown Ottawa.

[4] The complainant attributes the increased incidents of bicycle theft to individuals associated with encampments in the area and to the opioid crisis. She has observed expensive bicycles at missions and does not believe those who reside or drop in there could afford these bicycles. The complainant has also seen a number of bicycle “chop shops” emerge in the area near some of these missions.

[5] The complainant also reports that she has had two of her own bicycles stolen from her condominium.

[6] During the IoP’s investigation, the OPS provided data related to their investigation of bicycle thefts from 2019 to 2025. This data indicates that the OPS has successfully recovered / found over 60% of bicycles that have been reported stolen by members of the public.

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<sup>1</sup> While the complaint was made against the OPS, pursuant to section 10 of the Act, the responsibility to deliver “adequate and effective” policing locally resides with police service boards or, in the case of the Ontario Provincial Police, the OPP Commissioner.

<sup>2</sup> Section 123 of the Act requires an IoP inspector who completes an investigation of a complaint to report their findings to the Inspector General. This report is redacted to comply with the *Publication of Findings Reports and Directions under Sections 123 and 125 of the Act Regulation*, O Reg 317/24.

[7] The OPS has also implemented the “529 Garage” program after researching successful initiatives in other jurisdictions related to bicycle theft, and identifying a similar one that the Vancouver Police Department uses. Garage 529 is a virtual, app-based bicycle registration program which allows users to register their bicycles through their smartphones. Similar to a motor vehicle, the intent of “529 Garage” is to use registration as a tool to make it easier to recover a stolen bicycle, because certain details about the bicycle and its owner will be known when the police are contacted.

### III. ISSUES

[8] The sole issue for consideration is whether the OPS and OPSB have provided “adequate and effective” policing related to bicycle theft – the matter at issue in this complaint.

### IV. ANALYSIS

a) The requirement to deliver “adequate and effective” policing

[9] Section 10(1) of the Act requires police service boards in Ontario, including the OPSB, to provide “adequate and effective” policing in their area of responsibility.

[10] Section 11(1) of the Act defines “adequate and effective” policing as policing functions, including crime prevention and law enforcement, provided in accordance with standards set out in the Act’s regulations, among other requirements:

11. (1) Adequate and effective policing means all of the following functions provided in accordance with the standards set out in the regulations, including the standards with respect to the avoidance of conflicts of interest, and with the requirements of the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* and the *Human Rights Code*:

1. Crime prevention.
2. Law enforcement.
3. Maintaining the public peace.
4. Emergency response.
5. Assistance to victims of crime.
6. Any other prescribed policing functions.

b) There is no evidence of a systemic failure to provide adequate and effective policing related to bicycle thefts

[11] In this case, it is the policing functions of crime prevention and law enforcement that are engaged. The question I must answer is whether the OPS and OPSB adequately and effectively discharged their crime prevention and law enforcement obligations in relation to bicycle theft in Ottawa? Section 2(1) of the *Adequate and Effective Policing (General) Regulation*, O Reg 392/23 (the “Adequate and Effective Policing Regulation”) creates the generally applicable standard of “reasonableness” which applies to all six policing functions:

2. (1) A policing function shall be provided to an extent and in a manner that is reasonable, having regard to the following factors:

1. The policing needs of the community.
2. The geographic and socio-demographic characteristics of the police service’s area of policing responsibility.
3. The extent to and manner in which the policing function is effectively provided in similar communities in Ontario.
4. The extent to which past provision of the policing function by the police service has been effective in addressing the policing needs of the community.
5. Best practices respecting the policing function.

[emphasis added]

[12] In addition, section 3 of the Adequate and Effective Policing Regulation contains the following standards specifically related to crime prevention:

3. The following standards for adequate and effective policing, relating to crime prevention, are prescribed:

1. Crime prevention shall involve the provision of crime prevention initiatives, including community-based crime prevention initiatives.
2. Crime prevention initiatives shall be consistent with,
  - i. the strategic plan adopted under section 39 or 61 of the Act that applies with respect to the police service, and
  - ii. the policing needs of the community.

3. Crime prevention initiatives shall be monitored and regularly evaluated to determine their effectiveness and the ongoing need for them.

[13] Based on the information compiled in the investigation, there is no evidence that the standards related to crime prevention or law enforcement were not met. In fact, the generally applicable standard of “reasonableness” was most certainly met, and perhaps exceeded in this case. The OPS consulted with others in the policing sector that had success responding to bicycle thefts, identified a program from another jurisdiction that has proven successful and became a stakeholder in the development and implementation of a similar program in Ottawa (“529 Garage”). This is an example of good crime prevention and law enforcement innovation that identified a particular policing need in the community, and worked with community stakeholders to implement a specific initiative to address that issue. The results to date are also a proof point: the OPS has successfully recovered over 60% of stolen bicycles. The generally applicable standard of reasonableness was most certainly met by the OPS and OPSB in this case.

[14] I remind the OPS that section 3.3. of the Adequate and Effective Policing Regulation requires that crime prevention initiatives “shall be monitored and regularly evaluated to determine their effectiveness and the ongoing need for them.” I do not have any information to suggest that the OPS has not been monitoring and evaluating the “529 Garage” Program, so would simply encourage that this occur or continue. Once there is a sufficient track record of implementation to draw from, the OPS can also use this evaluative information to determine whether any improvements or ‘lessons learned’ can be implemented.

- c) There is no evidence of a failure to provide adequate and effective policing in response to the complainant’s specific reports of bicycle theft

[15] The *Investigations* Regulation, O Reg 395/23 (the “Investigations Regulation”) also contains standards related to investigations, including provisions about investigators being assigned to matters and collecting evidence:

5. Every investigation shall be undertaken by an investigator or senior investigator, as determined by a supervisor.

...

13. (1) An investigating officer shall ensure that all items of potential evidentiary value that may lawfully be collected are collected, regardless of whether immediate relevance to the investigation is established.

[16] With respect to the complaints' specific reports of two bicycle thefts, there is no indication these standards in the Investigations Regulation were not complied with. An investigator responded to the complainant's reports and collected items of potential evidentiary value – in this case, surveillance footage capturing the incident – as required by the Investigations Regulation. Obviously, police services cannot guarantee the outcome of any investigation – that is the nature of things. Here, the appropriate investigative steps the OPS is required to have in place as an organization were adhered to, and, therefore, this aspect of adequate and effective policing was met.

## **V. CONCLUSION**

[17] There is no evidence that the OPS or OPSB failed to provide adequate and effective policing in their response to bicycle thefts. On the contrary, the OPS and OPSB met the applicable standards contained in the Act's regulations concerning the two applicable policing functions: crime prevention and law enforcement.

**Date:** March 12, 2026

***Original Signed By***

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**Ryan Teschner**  
*Inspector General of Policing*

# FINDINGS REPORT

Ottawa Police Service

**Section 107(1)(a) Policing  
Complaint Investigation  
(INV-24-7)**

**Submitted to:**  
Ryan Teschner  
Inspector General of Policing of  
Ontario

**November 7, 2025**

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## ABOUT THE INSPECTOR GENERAL OF POLICING AND THE INSPECTORATE OF POLICING

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The Inspector General of Policing drives improved performance and accountability in policing and police governance by overseeing the delivery of adequate and effective policing across Ontario. The Inspector General ensures compliance with the province's policing legislation and standards, and has the authority to issue progressive, risk-based and binding directions and measures to protect public safety. Ontario's Community Safety and Policing Act embeds protections to ensure the Inspector General's statutory duty is delivered independently from government.

The Inspector General of Policing leads the Inspectorate of Policing (IoP). The IoP provides operational support to inspect, investigate, monitor, and advise Ontario's police services, boards and special constable employers. By leveraging independent research and data intelligence, the IoP promotes leading practices and identifies areas for improvement, ensuring that high-quality policing and police governance is delivered to make everyone in Ontario safer.

In March 2023, Ryan Teschner was appointed as Ontario's first Inspector General of Policing with duties and authorities under the Community Safety and Policing Act. Mr. Teschner is a recognized expert in public administration, policing and police governance.

For more information about the Inspector General of Policing or the IoP, please visit [www.ioontario.ca](http://www.ioontario.ca).

## INTRODUCTION

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This is a report to the Inspector General of Policing by an inspector appointed by the Inspector General, who has completed an investigation under Part VII of the [Community Safety and Policing Act, 2019](#) (CSPA).

## OVERVIEW OF INVESTIGATION

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### The Complaint

The complainant alleged that bicycle thefts are increasing in downtown Ottawa and claims the Ottawa Police Service is not doing enough to address the issue. The complainant attributed the thefts to individuals from encampments and local shelters and expressed frustration that this behaviour appeared to be tolerated by city councillors, police, and shelter organizations. The complainant further believes that taxpayers are not being adequately protected and she proposed targeted measures against homeless encampments and missions to address the problem of bicycle thefts.

### The Subject Police Service

**Name of Police Service:** Ottawa Police Service

**Service Headquarters:** 474 Elgin Street, Ottawa, ON, K2P 2J6

**Chief of Police:** Eric Stubbs

Chief of Police since November 2022

#### **Service Total Strength: (Actual & Authorized)**

- Number of sworn members:  
Actual: 1,584 (as of June 25, 2025)  
Authorized: 1,570
- Number of civilian members:  
Actual: 706 (as of June 25, 2025)  
Authorized: 717

#### **Geographic Service Area**

- 2778 Square Kilometers
- Community Population of approximately 1.11 million

## **Applicable Legislative and Regulatory Provisions**

[Section 11\(1\)](#) of the CSPA provides that adequate and effective policing means all of the following functions provided in accordance with the standards set out in the regulations, including the standards with respect to the avoidance of conflicts of interest, and with the requirements of the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* and the *Human Rights Code*:

1. Crime prevention.
2. Law enforcement.
3. Maintaining the public peace.
4. Emergency response.
5. Assistance to victims of crime.
6. Any other prescribed policing functions.

### **Ontario Regulation 392/23: ADEQUATE AND EFFECTIVE POLICING (GENERAL)**

was reviewed having regard to the allegations made in the complaint.

## **SUMMARY OF THE INVESTIGATION CONDUCTED**

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### **Complainant Interview**

An interview was conducted with the complainant who reported that, until recently, she resided in the downtown area of Ottawa. She stated that on two occasions, one in 2021 and the other in April 2024, that her bicycles (valued at over \$1,000 each), along with several other tenants' bicycles, were stolen from her condominium.

The complainant stated that bicycle theft is a serious issue in downtown Ottawa and that there is a dedicated Facebook group called, "Stolen Bikes Ottawa", where members post information on stolen bikes daily. She believes that residents are losing money, and that bicycle theft is creating a safety issue for the community. She believes that the rise in bicycle thefts is due to the opioid crisis.

The complainant has not personally witnessed any bicycle thefts in the area; however, she has seen numerous high-end bicycles at downtown missions and thought that residents of downtown missions could not likely be a rightful owner of a \$5,000 bicycle. The complainant also indicated that there are bicycle "chop shops" throughout downtown Ottawa, particularly near the missions.

She indicated that the condominium building where she previously resided did not permit tenants to bring bicycles to their units; rather, they had to store them in a bicycle room. In her two incidents of bicycle theft, she reported the matters to the Ottawa Police

Service (OPS). She did receive a phone call from an OPS detective and provided security footage from the building, which depicted the suspects breaking into the bicycle room wearing balaclavas.

The complainant does not feel that OPS is doing enough to address the issue of bicycle theft.

### Ottawa Police Service Records

The OPS provided IoP investigators with data in relation to bicycle thefts between 2019 and the first half of 2025. During this time, a total of 8,239 bicycles were reported stolen, of which 5,069 bicycles were recovered (including found and seized bicycles).

The OPS provided the following chart to illustrate their bike theft statistics:

Stolen vs Found Recovered								
	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	Grand Total
Stolen	1352	1316	1150	1312	1037	1133	939	8239
Found/Recovered	669	871	811	614	853	734	517	5069
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>2021</b>	<b>2187</b>	<b>1961</b>	<b>1926</b>	<b>1890</b>	<b>1867</b>	<b>1456</b>	<b>13308</b>

Property Status Excluding Stolen								
	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	Grand Total
Found	512	472	504	458	507	295	159	2907
Seized	104	284	216	71	73	105	64	917
Disposal		4	3	27	218	292	275	819
Recovered	52	110	86	55	54	42	18	417
Lost	3	1	3	2	4	2	1	16
Safekeeping		1	2	3	1		1	8
Other		1			1	2	1	5
Counterfeit	1							1
Destroyed/Returned/Disposed	1							1
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>673</b>	<b>873</b>	<b>814</b>	<b>616</b>	<b>858</b>	<b>738</b>	<b>519</b>	<b>5091</b>

\*Based on Reported Date as opposed to Occurrence Date.

\*\* Reflects number of bicycles stolen. Number of reports would be fewer due to instances where multiple bicycles listed in one report.

\*\*\* Found/Recovered value is aggregate of: Found, Seized, Disposal, Recovered, Safekeeping, Destroyed/Returned/Disposed.

OPS also provided information in relation to police projects and initiatives that were undertaken to address the issue of bicycle theft. For example, Project Handlebar was a proactive initiative involving frontline officers that took place between 2020 and 2021. During this period, OPS repatriated 100 stolen bicycles with their owners and recovered a further 28 abandoned bicycles. The total value of the recovered bicycles was estimated at \$130,000.

The OPS has also implemented a standard operating procedure (SOP) requiring officers to submit a report for any bicycle theft to support recovery efforts and aid in identification. This SOP additionally supports officers with respect to bicycle thefts but does not replace the standard investigative techniques such as scene processing by forensics, canvassing for witnesses or locating video evidence. The SOP reads as follows:

***Theft of Bike*** – A detailed description if available, make, model, any accessories, serial number and/or distinguishing marks and value of the bike (</> \$5000). Enter the stolen bike in Property, specifically in Bike tab, send to CPIC if serial number is available. Ask if the bike is registered through '529 Garage'. If yes, owner needs to activate an alert notification through '529 Garage' and indicate this in the report.

Additionally, the OPS consulted with the Vancouver Police Service regarding their successful strategies to address bicycle theft. As a result, OPS adopted "Garage 529," an app-based bike registration and recovery program designed to engage the community in preventing and responding to bicycle theft. The application allows users to register their bikes through their smartphones. The OPS continues to partner with community stakeholders to support and maintain the program, which remains active at the time of this report.

## INVESTIGATION FINDINGS

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I make the following findings, relying on the information collected during the investigation and summarized in part above:

- 1. During the period between January 1, 2019, and June 30, 2024, the Ottawa Police Service (OPS) dealt with a significant number of bicycle theft incidents.**
  - a. During this time a total of 6,861 bicycles were reported stolen in the city of Ottawa.
  - b. Of the 6,861 bicycles reported stolen, OPS recovered 61.4% (4,216) of the stolen bicycles.
  
- 2. The Ottawa Police Service is a stakeholder in the “529 Garage” Program, actively engaging community members to address the issue of bicycle theft.**
  - a. The OPS consulted with the Vancouver Police Department (VPD) to gain insight and best practices in relation to the VPD’s successful bicycle recovery initiatives. One initiative that evolved from this consultation is “529 Garage.”
  - b. The “529 Garage” program specifically enables citizens to report and post information about stolen bicycles through a smartphone application
  - c. OPS has partnered with other community stakeholders to ensure the ongoing use and success of this program.
  
- 3. The Ottawa Police Service has undertaken initiatives such as “Project Handlebar” to address the issue of bicycle theft in Ottawa.**
  - a. Project Handlebar was conducted by front line officers in the downtown area during the early stages of the Covid 19 Pandemic (2020-2021).
  - b. During this project, OPS officers recovered a total of 128 stolen/abandoned bicycles valued at over \$130,000.00.



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